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2014 International Food and Drink Event Africa (IFEA)

Report Categories:

Trade Show Evaluation

Approved By:

Abigail Nguema

Prepared By:

Margaret Ntloedibe

Report Highlights:

FAS/Pretoria hosted 13 U.S. exhibitors for the second annual International Food and Drink Event Africa (IFEA) in Johannesburg on November 5-7, 2014. The exhibitors in the USA Pavilion included 10 companies, 2 FAS cooperator groups (USAPEEC and USMEF), and one regional trade association, the Southern United States Trade Association (SUSTA). FAS/Pretoria staff provided support to the U.S. exhibitors at IFEA in a number of different ways, including recruiting young South African entrepreneurs as booth assistants and organizing a business networking breakfast. As a result of the show, U.S. exhibitors secured export opportunities that included 60 serious contacts, \$225,000 in on-site sales, and almost \$1.7 million in projected sales over the 12 months following the show. IFEA is a USDA-endorsed trade show and is billed as Africa's top international food expo, giving U.S. exhibitors the opportunity to showcase a variety of products from the United States and to meet retail and food service buyers, importers, and distributors from the continent.

General Information:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) hosted 13 U.S. exhibitors for the second annual International Food and Drink Event Africa (IFEA) in Johannesburg on November 5-7, 2014. The exhibitors in the USA Pavilion included 10 companies, 2 FAS cooperator groups (USAPEEC and USMEF), and one regional trade association, the Southern United States Trade Association (SUSTA). IFEA is a USDA-endorsed trade show and is billed as Africa's top international food expo, giving U.S. exhibitors the opportunity to showcase a variety of products from the United States and to meet retail and food service buyers, importers, and distributors from the continent. The USA pavilion was located near the main entrance to the exhibition hall and remained busy as a center of attraction.

USDA Trade Servicing Activities:

FAS/Pretoria staff lined up a series of activities to support the U.S. exhibitors at IFEA. This year for the first time, FAS outreach efforts included recruiting a group of young South Africans to participate as booth assistants to the U.S. exhibitors. Seven dynamic young people volunteered to work with the U.S. companies in presenting their products to IFEA visitors and staffing booths for those exhibitors that were not able to send representatives to Johannesburg for the event.

FAS organized an exhibitor briefing prior to the show opening as part of the trade servicing aimed at ensuring the success of IFEA for the visiting U.S. companies. Agricultural Attaché Abigail Nguema opened the briefing with welcome remarks and introduced the two speakers for the event. The first speaker was FAS Agricultural Specialist Wellington Sikuka, who gave a presentation on the Southern African agricultural environment. Next, the U.S. Consul General in Johannesburg, Christopher Rowan, gave remarks on the South African business and cultural environment. After the presentations, the U.S. companies had time to exchange ideas with Mr. Rowan and the FAS and Foreign Commercial Service staff present.

On the second morning of the trade show, FAS/Pretoria hosted a business networking breakfast to promote U.S. agricultural exports by providing the U.S. exhibitors with an opportunity to meet with well-matched South African importers. The U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission Catherine Hill-Herndon delivered key note remarks at the event, which was part of the USDA Sub-Saharan Africa Trade Initiative launched in South Africa a year ago to advance President Obama's Strategy toward Sub-Saharan Africa. When introducing this strategy in June 2012, President Obama noted that "Africa can be the world's next major economic success story," and that "the economies of sub-Saharan Africa are among the world's most rapidly growing." The Obama Administration signaled that it will encourage U.S. companies to pursue trade and investment opportunities in the region, and that was FAS's goal in that week in conjunction with the IFEA trade show. FAS shared the list of the invitees to the networking breakfast with the U.S. exhibitors prior to the well-attended event. Afterwards, the U.S. companies, South African invitees, and FAS staff proceeded to USA pavilion for product presentations and individual meetings.

Exhibitor Feedback and Trade Show Outcomes:

There was positive feedback from several South African invitees to the networking event, including:

- Ryan Quirk, Pick n Pay: “Thank you for extending the invitation to attend the event. It was a pleasure to meet up with the various companies as they had some very interesting and exciting products on offer.”
- Ebrahim Hasrod, Bidvest Foodservice: “Thank you for your email and kind invitation to attend the breakfast which I found really worthwhile.”
- Andries Cronje, Tiger Brands: “I think the breakfast arrangements were outstanding. I made contact with the people who I wanted to meet, in actual fact, I sat right next to one of them at the breakfast – Reid Edgar of Tru-Nut.”

The official opening of IFEA was marked by a ribbon-cutting by Unati Speirs, Director of Agro-Processing at the South Africa Department of Trade and Industry. Also present at the ceremony were IFEA Brand Director Chris McCuin and Food & Hospitality Event Director Nick Sarnadas.

IFEA 2014 saw a significant growth in participation from the previous year, with a 65% increase in the number of exhibitors, including 172 exhibitors from 25 countries and 11 international pavilions. Over 2,270 local and international visitors from 38 countries flocked to the Sandton Convention Center over the three days of the show to seek new business relationships. As a result of the show, U.S. exhibitors secured export opportunities that included 60 serious contacts, \$225,000 in on-site sales, and almost \$1.7 million in projected sales over the 12 months following the show. The U.S. exhibitors’ comments were positive overall. However, during set-up for the show, the seven companies in the SUSTA delegation expressed surprise and dismay about the open floor plan of the SUSTA section of the USA Pavilion. FAS/Pretoria staff was able work out an acceptable booth arrangement for all of the companies. Exhibitors also voiced concern about South Africa’s high tariffs and the disadvantage to U.S. exports, as well as advocating for a free trade agreement as a possible solution.

During the show, the IFEA organizers announced the planned 2016 merging of the IFEA and Hostex trade shows into a new show, Food & Hospitality Africa. According to the organizers, the decision to merge the two shows resulted from industry input, and joining the two shows will create the biggest food, drink and hospitality trade exhibition on the African continent. The purposed of the new show will be to bring local and international buyers and sellers of quality products and services together under one roof. Food & Hospitality Africa is scheduled for May 3-5, 2016 at the Gallagher Convention Center in Midrand, Johannesburg. The SUSTA representative at IFEA, Shehzin Jafar, suggested a trade mission in 2015 to bridge the gap between IFEA 2014 and the new show in 2016.

Number of Exhibitors: 13, including two not in attendance with booths staffed by booth assistants

Number new-to-market: 4

Number new-to-export: 2

Small (under 50 employees): 3

On-site sales: \$225,000

Projected 12-month sales: \$1.69 million

New products introduced: 75

Serious contacts made: 60

Best selling products: canned goods and condiments; chicken leg quarters; mints, sours, chocolate candy, and lip balm; fishless tuna; powdered peanut butter; Simply 7 chips; spreads; cocktail mixes; flavors for beverages and confectionery.

FAS/Pretoria appreciates the guidance and support provided by the FAS/Washington TSS office throughout the event planning, in particular for the enhancement funding.

IFEA 2014 Photos:



Deputy Chief of Mission Catherine Hill-Herndon
with the volunteer booth assistants
at the FAS business networking event



The USA Pavilion



American Beverage Marketers - USA Pavilion



Unati Speirs (center), Director of Agro-Processing at the South Africa Department of Trade and Industry, visits the USDA booth with FAS staff and IFEA organizers



IFEA event promotion film the USA Pavilion